



September 1, 2005

The Right Honourable Paul Martin
Prime Minister of Canada
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister:

Re: Lock-out of employees and audience at the CBC

The working citizens of this country and their unions are increasingly alarmed by the federal government's silence towards the lock-out at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The lock-out and the federal government's ensuing silence raise many serious concerns about today's job market. It raises concern about managerial ethics, about the nature of labour relations in public institutions which provide services to people as well as the role public broadcasting plays in the promotion of Canadian identity.

Right now, for the three million workers of the Canadian Labour Congress, the overwhelming question is this: How can the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation properly serve Canadians if it does not live by the values Canadians hold dear?

Today's job market – As you know, a few weeks ago, the Canadian Labour Congress published "*Better Educated, Badly Paid and Underemployed: A Statistical Picture of Young Workers in Canada*".

Over and above the conclusions suggested by the title, we have also documented that today's job market unfairly confine young workers to precarious employment way beyond what should be entry level positions. Moreover, the job market treats young workers of colour even harsher, including those who are born, raised and trained in Canada. This unfortunate phenomenon carries serious social, demographic and economic consequences as, to make do, younger workers stay longer in their parents' home.

The mandate of the CBC is to “safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada,” as stated in the *Broadcasting Act*. The senior managers at the CBC defeat the very meaning of this mandate of service when they demand that their employees entrench the worst features of the current job market into their collective agreement.

Managerial ethics – The senior management at the CBC hides behind the word ‘flexibility’, when really it wants to create a large pool of disposable and docile workers. If precarious working conditions are so effective, beneficial and productive, why don’t these CBC senior managers demand these conditions for themselves? None of the senior managers works or would work for short-term, disposable contracts.

Nature of labour relations in the public sector – Because of its visibility, its journalistic vocation and the purposes to be served with its public funding, the CBC must be a model employer instead of aspiring to be a media production and broadcasting sweatshop.

Thus, to the extent that bargaining was proceeding and everything was routine in the workplace, there was never a valid or legitimate reason to order a lock-out of its employees. Three weeks later, there is still no valid reason to maintain and continue the lock-out.

To make matters worse, the senior managers, realizing they had also locked-out their audiences, misappropriated their public funding to advertise insults about their employees in private media outlets.

Public broadcasting and the promotion of Canadian identity – As evident in the debates at the Canadian Labour Congress’ last triennial convention, in June, in Montreal, Canadian working families believe that “the CBC provides the best hope of providing news and cultural programming to all Canadians that are fair and accurate and in the public interest,” and that “public broadcasting is crucial to fostering a culture of respect for diversity and democratic participation.” For these reasons, we also urge the federal government to provide the CBC with the funding necessary to expand Canadian TV drama, local news programming, and radio stations in under-served communities including the official languages minorities. Moreover, in addition, we urge you to add and secure permanently \$60 million to the CBC’s annual budget that so far has been provided on a year-to-year basis. These measures would take away most of the excuses the senior managers at the CBC tend to use to justify the unjustifiable.

In conclusion and more immediately, we urge you and your Ministers to raise your voice against the lock-out because the senior managers at the CBC are wrong to believe that Canadians will recognize themselves in news and cultural programs produced in exploitative conditions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'KVG', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kenneth V. Georgetti
President.

cc: Officers and Assistants
The. Hon. Liza Frulla, Minister of Canadian Heritage
CLC Executive Council

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